

MND-B general pleased with initial results in Sadr City

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - A combined force of Iraqi police, national police and Multi-National Division -

Baghdad troops completed a second day of security operations in the eastern Baghdad Sadr City district March 5.

Members of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team and the 3rd Stryker Brigade

Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division conducted security operations with their Iraqi counterparts and reported no hostile contact for a second day in an area known to be a stronghold of Muqtada Al Sadr, the extremist leader of

rogue elements known for extrajudicial killings and attacks against coalition forces.

Some residents seemed

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(Photo by Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, MND-B PAO)

Iraqi children wave at a Multi-National Division - Baghdad convoy in the eastern Baghdad Sadr City district March 5.

Tribal sheiks re-open school in Intasar with MND-B help

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1-1 Cav. Public Affairs

INTASAR, Iraq - Tribal sheiks, city council members, the Iraqi Army, Iraqi police and Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers are helping the people here to get their lives back to a sense of normalcy nearly five months after sectarian violence rocked the small community.

One of the signs that stability is returning in the village happened March 5 as Intasar sheiks, council members and

Soldiers from Battery C, 1st "Red Lion" Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment joined together to re-open the Intasar elementary school here.

The school which had been damaged by looters during the sectarian clashes was closed for several months until clean up crews could be hired to clean away debris.

"We helped to provide money to clean the school through the commander's emergency relief fund and the Iraqi government also provided money for the effort," said Capt. Evan Gotkin, commander, Battery C,

1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment and a native of Long Island, N.Y. "The school has been the focus of the town and their way of saying let's get life back to normal."

For their first day of school, Iraqi boys and girls took their first yearly test. Once the students had been tested, they joined in a ribbon cutting ceremony as tribal sheiks and city council members officially re-opened the

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Promising first start in Sadr City

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genuinely pleased to see the troops arrive, as small children were seen smiling and waving to coalition forces.

"It's a promising first start," said Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general of MND-B.

"We sense there is an opportunity opening here that we want to immediately take advantage of while working with the Iraqi security forces and the people of Sadr City," he said.

The citizens of Sadr City appear to welcome the respite from recent violence over the last few months. The killings have fallen off from more than 200 in December and January to less than 20 during the past 30 days as the new security plan for the Iraqi capital is carried out by newly arrived



(Photo by Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, MND-B PAO)

Brig. Gen. John F. Campbell, deputy commanding general for maneuver, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, discusses on-going security operations in Sadr City with Brig. Gen. Ali, commander, 8th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, March 5 in Sadr City.

troops. city are ready for a change."

"Although much too early to tell," Fil noted, "we sense that the people of the At the conclusion of the security operations a Joint Security Station will be estab-

lished in the District Police Station for Sadr City. This security station will allow a 24-hour presence in the Sadr City district and facilitate coordination between all security forces.

Fil said the key to future success is the newly-established Baghdad Operational Command, and the close coordination and cooperation that have been established.

"The Baghdad Operational Command became fully operational on the first of this month and they are off to a great start," the general said.

"Lt. Gen. Abud is directing and controlling Iraqi security forces throughout Baghdad. We are coordinating between our commands in a way that is having an immediate effect on the streets. Feedback from the Iraqis has been positive and we feel at this time we are on the right track," he said.

Arabic Phrase of the Day

saabuun

Defined:
soap

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 73
Low: 50



Tomorrow

High: 75
Low: 50



Friday

High: 77
Low: 50

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(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Sheldon Fant, a platoon sergeant for Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, shares a laugh with an Iraqi boy March 4 in the town of Intasar, Iraq during the re-opening of the school there.

Intasar takes a step in the right direction

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school.

Battery C Soldiers then handed out back packs-filled with school supplies, soccer balls and t-shirts to the children. "It's very important that they're back in school since they are the future of Iraq," said Sgt. 1st Class Sheldon Fant, a platoon sergeant and native of Anderson, S.C. "It's a good experience for our Soldiers to interact with the Iraqi people."

As the children attended classes, Intasar tribal sheiks and city council members held an impromptu meeting at the school to discuss issues the town is facing to include security and reconstruction within the village.

Nearly 1,200 families had left the village when sectarian violence broke out five months ago and more than 70 homes were burned.

"The Sunni and Shia sheiks got together, and it was phenomenal," said Gotkin. "They

basically said, 'Enough is enough, we are not sects, we are Muslims-one Iraqi people.' This sparked other nearby towns to hold similar meetings with their own sheiks having a reconciliation, so it is spreading.

"Their support of the peace process is a visible demonstration of hope," added Gotkin. "We'll use some of our money and the Iraqi government will use some of their money to help the people here rebuild. They are also trying to entice people to come back and live in peace again."

Some of the things being considered are the issues of refugees returning to the town, the building of new mosques and funding for a new Iraqi Police station.

"The Iraqis still want us here and to see us helping them with security," said Gotkin. "Tip cards passed out all over town are causing the tip line at the (Joint Security Station) to ring off the hook."

"The U.S. presence has been very good

Baghdad in Brief

Wolverines find cache west of Baghdad airport

RADWANIYAH, Iraq - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers discovered a weapons cache along the main highway into Baghdad March 5.

Soldiers from Troop A, 1st "Wolverines" Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) found the cache near the village of Radwaniyah, adjacent to the western side of the Baghdad International Airport.

The cache contained 10 fragmentation hand grenades, 165 mortar primers, eight 12.7 mm machinegun rounds, two bags of bulk explosives with blasting caps, a box with 100 blasting caps, 1,000 9mm pistol rounds, six hand grenade fuses, a bag of plastic explosives, 1,000 AK-47 rounds and an improvised explosive device.

for the people and the people are thankful for the help of the U.S. Soldiers," said Jabar Hussein, one of Intasar's tribal sheiks. "With the efforts of the Iraqi security forces and U.S. Soldiers, we can make something good for the people."

"I think it's definitely good that the Shias and Sunnis have decided to end the violence here so they can live together-this is definitely a model for the rest of the country to follow and it's good for us to promote that," said 1st Lt. Justin Cowne, a platoon leader for the battery and a native of Jasper, Ga. "We're not here to run their country, we're just here to help them and we hope we can help for the long term."

As the Soldiers worked at the school and the city council met with tribal sheiks, the smell of fresh baked bread emanated from a newly opened bakery a few buildings down from the school, another sign, said Gotkin, that normalcy is slowly returning to the village.

Pre-convoy checks: mission essential

By Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown
Anaconda Times Staff Writer

CAMP TAJI, Iraq- Combat Logistic Patrols run throughout the Iraqi theater daily, and without the cargo they carry, servicemembers would be hard pressed to perform everyday functions.

The 1687th Combat Heavy Equipment Transport (HET) Company is like many transportation units in Iraq; their mission is to keep supplies moving to where they are needed.

Preparing for the road is an important task, and the Soldiers are serious about being ready.

"It takes as long to prepare for a mission as the mission itself," said Staff Sgt. William E. Lundergan of Louisville, Ky., the assistant convoy commander of his platoon.

An average day when the 1687th Soldiers are going out on the road starts with an early morning brief. During the briefing, they learn where they will be going, the load they will carry, as well as road and security conditions.

Afterwards, they 'stage' their vehicles. Usually hauling large equipment, such as tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles, the HET drivers line their trucks up into rows according to the order they will be in during the night's convoy.

After communications checks within the vehicles are completed, the drivers head back to their living quarters for some much-needed rest in preparation for a night on the road.

The number of times per week 1687th Soldiers go out, and the length of their missions can vary greatly, Lundergan said. A mission can last anywhere from one to 30 days, and while any of the 45 Soldiers in Lundergan's platoon can go out on any mission, the exact number of Soldiers needed depends on the mission requirements.

Lundergan said the most important part of going out on missions are the pre-convoy checks they conduct, and maintenance.

"We stress hard on maintenance



(Photo by Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown)

Staff Sgt. Jason Routt, with the 1687th Combat (HET) Company, checks his truck's oil before deeming it ready for the road at Camp Taji, Iraq Feb. 15.

because we'd rather do it on base than out on the road," he said. "At all costs we try not to stop a convoy unless it is an emergency."

Flat tires are a common problem with the HETs, not only because of the vehicles' large size, but because of the weight they haul. Lundergan and the other drivers check their vehicles several times per day to see if any mechanical problems have arisen.

"The job is challenging," said Spc. Kelly N. Martin of Terre Haute, Ind., a truck driver with the 1687th. "You never know what can happen."

Martin agreed that flat tires were the most common maintenance problem, as she inspected the tires of her own truck.

"PMCS is the most important part," she said.

Spc. Trisha A. McCammon of Sullivan, Ind., also a truck driver in the unit and Martin's truck partner, said sometimes their job can be a dangerous one.

McCammon was driving a truck that sustained small arms fire one night, while the truck behind her hit an improvised explosive device. Two of her tires were shot, and her window was severely damaged, but she kept driving. No one in the

convoy suffered injuries.

It is under those circumstances that it is especially dangerous to stop, McCammon said, stressing the importance of pre-convoy checks. If something had been mechanically wrong with any of the HETs, it could have been a disaster, she said.

Lundergan as an experienced driver tries to mentor the younger Soldiers. He said if a certain stretch of road looks uncertain, and he drives through it, the other Soldiers will follow.

The biggest challenges for Lundergan are learning new routes and training inexperienced drivers.

"Every day is a challenge working with the HETs," he said.

All Soldiers in the platoon agree that they enjoy driving because it gets them off the base, and they are able to see much of the country by road- an opportunity not all Soldiers get.

With the current surge of Soldiers into the Baghdad area, Lundergan noted that his platoon's mission isn't going to change. They aren't going to slow down or speed up operations, he said, but will continue their mission of getting heavy cargo to where it is needed.

Boys 'down under' readying to rotate home

By **Spc. Alexis Harrison**
2-1 Cav. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION III, Iraq - While thousands of Soldiers are slated to arrive to Iraq due to the security push the announced by the president, one small group of troops from the "land down under" have been quietly answering their own call to duty all the while.

Infantry and cavalymen from the Australian Army's Security Detachment 10 have been operating out of Baghdad's International Zone for almost six months now, acting as security for their ambassador and diplomats. During their six months in Iraq, they've learned what it's like to be a versatile force and how to get the job done while having a little fun.

"Our job is to watch the ambassador and our diplomatic mission while he travels around Baghdad," said Lance Cpl. Guy Lalor, a Brisbane native and crew commander for the security team. "It's different to what ... you think of when you think of joining Cav and Army. It's a completely different role."

Anytime the ambassador has to travel, he's escorted by the combined arms team. Although it's not what they thought a rotation into the notorious capital city would be like, they've almost completed their six-month tour.

Detachment commander, Maj. Terrence Cook, said that it's been a good rotation overall. They've learned a lot from their experi-

ences and they've come away virtually unharmed.

Lt. Scott Klima, a troop leader from Darwin, said that the threat they face is about the same as any other coalition force. Roadside bombs have been the biggest threat while traveling around the city; however, they've also helped the troopers make friends with American units.

"We've built up a good relationship with all the guys we've worked with," said Klima.

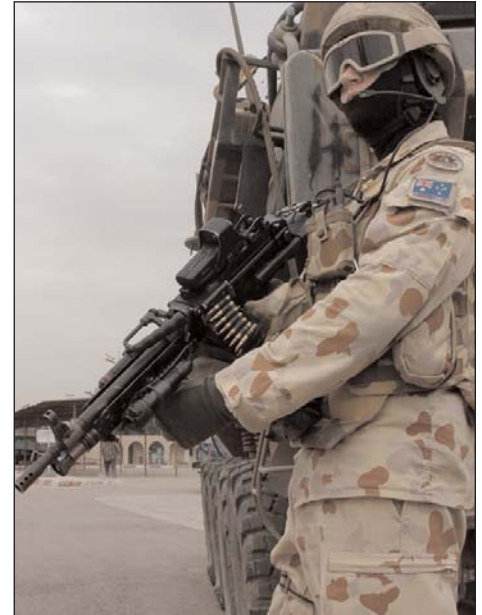
They're no strangers to being out in the "bush." They've trained with some of the most elite units in the world like the U.S. Army Rangers and the British Special Forces.

While in Iraq, the side-by-side training hasn't stopped. Many of the medics with the detachment regularly go to the Combat Support Hospital in the IZ to work and train with their coalition counterparts. Cook said that it's even more commendable since they do it on their free time.

Cook said that although the unit is well trained, disciplined and battle-proven, it's still just a little different than most other Australian units.

The small unit is composed of both infantry and cavalry troops from the 3rd Battalion (Parachute), Royal Australian Regiment, 2nd Cavalry Regiment and the 2/14th Light Horse of the Queensland Mounted Infantry.

The mixed unit of little more than 100 troops isn't much different from their American counterparts living right across the



(Photos by Spc. Alexis Harrison 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Pvt. Jason Fiesley, an Australian trooper with Security Detachment 10 based at Forward Operating Base Union III, Baghdad, provides security outside the International Zone March 1.

base. Both have important roles to fulfill for themselves and their countries, and both the Australians and members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have a strong history of war fighting and honor.

The Australian Army has played a vital role in every major conflict starting from its creation in the battlefields of South Africa, where it was born, up to the war on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

"We know how to have fun and be relaxed," said Cook. "But when the mission starts, the guys are as focused as anybody."

Joining the Australian Army is basically the same as joining the American. Soldiers are bound to a four-year contract, and afterward, they can reenlist for as long as they like.

"People say they join the Army to see the world, and that's still the case today," said Lalor.

The "Diggers" have always been willing to travel to serve their country. They've been to Africa, both World Wars, Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam and the Middle East.

Cook said that as long as the war on terror is ongoing, they'll be here doing their part.



A group of Australian Soldiers get ready to go out on mission from Forward Operating Base Union III March 1.